'John Taylor's thoroughly researched book is an impressive analysis of East Timor's ordeal under Indonesian occupation since 1976. Drawing on a wide range of sources he explains cogently why the United States, Australia and the Western democracies have abetted the Indonesian regime's aggression. In harrowing detail, he describes the campaign of war, torture, disappearances, forced resettlement and planned famine which over fifteen years have cost at least 200,000 East Timorese lives. Particularly enlightening is his account of the reasons for the astonishing stamina of the East Timorese resistance, and his balanced judgment of the various East Timorese leaderships' successes and failures.'

– Ben Anderson, Director, Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University

Some wars make the world's headlines; others do not. This book is about a war on a remote island, north of Australia and two thousand miles east of Djakarta. It is a war that has never completely stopped since Indonesia first invaded East Timor in December 1975. The reasons for silence, as this book makes clear, lie not just in distance, but in the economic and geopolitical interests of the leading powers in the region: Indonesia has the world's fifth largest population, huge oil and other natural resources and a crucial strategic location. Little wonder the USA, Japan and Australia have sought to downplay this forgotten war.

But the issue will not go away. News of atrocities continue to reach the outside world. Portugal, the former colonial ruler of the island, has never recognised Indonesia's occupation. The people of East Timor – utterly different in language, religion and culture from largely Muslim Indonesia – have never ceased to resist.

Like Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the illegality and brutality of the Indonesian attempt to pacify the island raise issues of the enforceability of United Nations resolutions and respect for human rights, as well as the specific East Timorese demand for self-determination.

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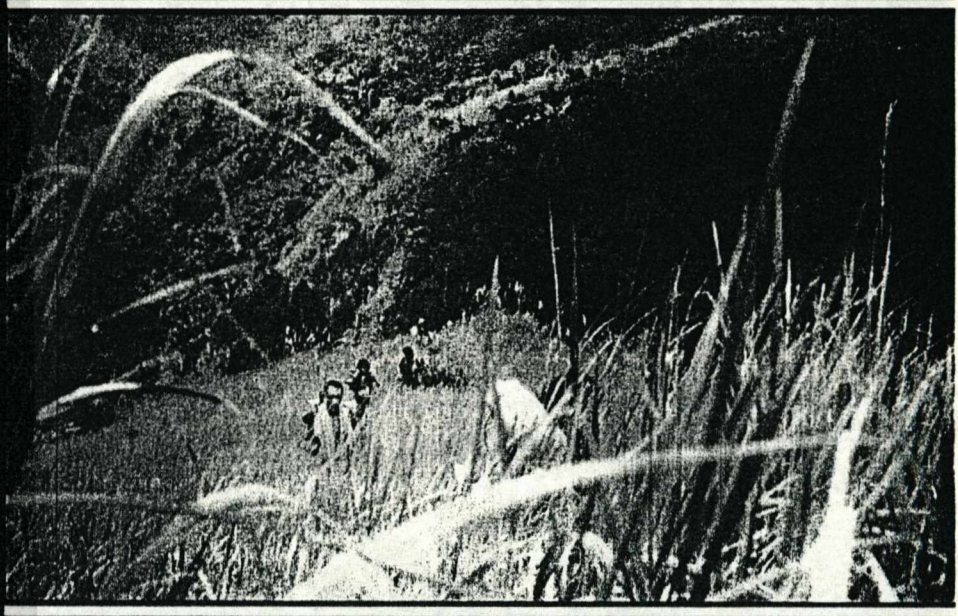
INDONESIA'S FORGOTTEN WAR

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF EAST TIMOR



JOHN G. TAYLOR

'A pathbreaking work, which manages to show events through the eyes of those who lived through the brutalities of the Indonesian invasion and military occupation'
PETER CAREY

2. East Timor and Indonesia: Political Developments from the Pacific War to the Portuguese Revolution

During the period following the Pacific War, political power in East Timor was held largely by a grouping of élites whose authority derived from their positions both in the colonial structure and in the indigenous kinship system.

In the indigenous system, political power was exercised by *liurai* and *suco* chiefs. Despite their political displacement in the early years of the twentieth century, the *liurai* (and most notably those with royal status) maintained a powerful control over their former subjects. They dominated the 'replacement' *suco* leaders promoted to positions of local power by the colonial administration. *Liurai* and *suco* bases thus formed the loci of power; status accruing to groups on grounds of religion, landholding or age continued to be of lesser importance.

In the colonial system, power rested on administrative, military or economic foundations, the latter in trade or plantation holdings. In addition to these power centres, there was also one founded on a commercial base, located in the Chinese community. Chinese formed about 2 per cent of East Timor's population during the post-war period.[1] Their contacts with Timor dated from their fifteenth-century involvement in the sandalwood trade; settlement came later, with Portuguese and Dutch 'pacification' at the beginning of the twentieth century.[2] Many Chinese subsequently married into Timorese families. Although not all Chinese were involved in trading, they nevertheless dominated East Timor's commercial sector, notably in retailing. By the end of the 1960s, 397 of the 400 retail outlets were run by Chinese families, who also played an important role in the buying and selling of grain. Most Chinese were educated in Taiwanese schools, and remained Taiwanese citizens, as in many other areas of Southeast Asia. Being to a degree institutionally separate, and often located at the end of a commercial chain, directly linked with consumers and producers, Chinese were often stereotyped by Timorese as wealthy profiteers who ultimately owed their allegiance to a foreign state. Although this stereotype undoubtedly corresponded to members of the commercial élite in the Chinese community, it often bore little relation to the reality of life for many poorer, non-trading Chinese in the villages. Membership of the élites in the colonial sector was extended as a result of post-war changes introduced reluctantly by an increasingly impoverished colonial power. These changes occurred mostly in the areas of education and administration.

Catholicism pervaded education: the first schools in Timor had been established in the eighteenth century by missionaries and, by the mid-1960s, the church still controlled 60 per cent of primary-school education. The colonial administration organized schools for Portuguese *assimilados* and *mesticos*, whilst the Chinese and Moslem communities ran their own institutions. The Portuguese army groomed Timorese through their network of training schools in the rural areas. Aiming to consolidate its rule, the colonial power began to train Timorese for administrative positions by raising educational levels. Typically, they left it too late and did too little. Although the numbers attending primary schools increased from 8000 to 57,000 between 1954 and 1974, this expansion seemed to have little effect; 93 per cent of the population remained illiterate by 1973.[3] The reasons for this are not hard to find. As one observer noted in 1975: 'Education is a tremendous economic burden and confers only dubious benefits on a rural family. Students' parents must pay for books and uniforms, and many large rural families can afford to send only a couple of children'.[4]

Furthermore, the sort of education children received was often both irrelevant and alien to their home life. Surveying primary education in the early 1970s, another observer wrote:

> The first year in *posto* and *suco* schools run by the missions was a preparatory year aimed at giving children a grasp of the Portuguese language. Those who did not succeed in this year were severely handicapped in the rest of their education. As rural Timorese generally spoke no Portuguese at home this would have been a high percentage. The curriculum of the next four years consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic and the history of Portugal. Even in the remotest villages children were required to commit to memory the rivers, railways and cities of Portugal. Timorese culture and traditions were not mentioned in the classroom and neighbouring Asian countries rarely mentioned. There was a very high drop-out rate even at the primary school level.[5]

With this sort of content and organization, the results were two-fold: an increasing alienation from colonial culture and a marginal improvement in the level of basic literacy skills. Both these developments were influential in the emergence of the differing ideas about independence which developed in the countryside in the early 1970s.

Equally influential were the changes that took place in the secondary and tertiary sectors of education. Although the actual increase was relatively small at the secondary level, the result was the creation of small, educated urban élites, based in towns such as Maubisse, Lospalos and Baucau but mainly in the colonial capital, Dili. Very few Timorese went on to tertiary education, which after 1970 involved entering either one high school, one army-team training centre, one technical school or attending university in Lisbon. Before 1970, only two students per year attended university, but by 1974 there were 39 students in attendance.

Most of these tertiary-level students eventually took up posts in government administration, the health service, education or the army. In all these areas there was a limited 'Timorization' from the mid-1960s onwards, as élite membership was extended minimally to the indigenous population. In this process educated Timorese soon came up against the all-too-familiar realities of their childhood: rigid political control, colonial hierarchies, propaganda masquerading as education in sparsely resourced schools[6] and a rural sector where basic diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and leprosy were endemic, resulting in a 50 per cent death rate for children under the age of five.[7]

At the same time, it was all too apparent that Portugal would not relinquish its colonial control unless forced to do so. 'Portugal would no more give up Timor than America would give up Hawaii', declared a government official to a visiting journalist in 1964.[8] Since the early 1950s, the United Nations had put increasing pressure on Portugal to expedite a policy of decolonization,[9] but to little effect. Indeed, one of the main reasons for the limited developments occurring in Timor in the 1960s was the increasing success of the independence movements in the African colonies and the ensuing heavy burden of defence expenditure on the Portuguese government. Hence a restructuring of the imperial system took place to provide for greater autonomy for the colonies, the ultimate aim being to delay the achievement of independence by creating a federal framework in which the 'overseas territories' could co-exist under a benevolent Portuguese tutelage.

The prospect before Timor's newly-educated élite groups of a lengthy Portuguese presence co-existed with an increasing awareness on their part of the country's potential for development. Post-war expansion in the cultivation of export crops and the improvement in the infrastructure, together with increases in investment from abroad, held out possibilities for national development, if the capital accumulated from trade and commerce in the controlling Portuguese companies of SAPT and SOTA (*Sociedade Orientale do Transportes e Armagens*), could be diffused into the domestic agricultural sector. This conclusion was reinforced by the discovery of potentially rich off-shore oil and gas deposits in the late 1960s, followed by the awarding of concessions to international corporations by the Portuguese government.[10] From the mid-1960s onwards, three themes dominated discussions amongst the newly recruited members of East Timor's élite: the potential for economic development; the lack of any social or political initiative by the colonial power; and the seeming eternity of Portuguese rule.

Although the members of these élites occupied positions in areas like education or administration, whose institutions enshrined colonial values, they nevertheless formulated their ideas in terms which frequently owed as much to their socialization in Timorese culture as to the values generated by their recent education and training in the colonial system.[11] This was reinforced for many by their being related directly to families holding economic and political power in the local élite. Consequently, it seemed possible that the separation which colonialism had attempted to create and perpetuate between rural indigenous and urban-based colonial-oriented élites could begin to be undermined by

developing ties between these groups. In this process, it seemed likely that the dominant values of the indigenous system would be influential, particularly given this system's ability to express novel political and cultural values in traditional ideological forms. In the mid-1960s, it thus seemed possible that new social and political groups could emerge, with an ability to express their increasing knowledge of the values of national development in the framework provided by the values of indigenous society. This, however, depended on two factors: the ability of the Portuguese administration to plan a phased process of decolonization, and the ability of the élites in Timor to develop viable rural-based political parties. If these could be achieved, then political independence was possible; and, with the support of a powerful, cohesive indigenous sector, East Timor could become a successful developing state in Southeast Asia. The success of this scenario depended not only upon internal developments, however, but also upon the international and, more particularly, the regional context — the Southeast Asian framework so blithely ignored by Portuguese colonialism since the defeat of the Dutch in the seventeenth century and, most importantly, within this framework, East Timor's vast and populous neighbour, Indonesia.

Indonesia

In the aftermath of the Pacific War, with the demise of Dutch colonial control, Indonesia rapidly became the lynch-pin of Southeast Asian security. Containing the world's fifth largest population, with an abundance of raw materials and fertile soils, and strategically placed between the Indian and Pacific oceans, the newly independent Indonesian state commanded attention. So much so that the major influence supporting its independence in negotiations with the Dutch was none other than the United States government itself.

Despite its potential, the new state nevertheless faced major problems. Colonialism had undermined the economic basis for its national development and left it without any viable administrative structure. Both these had to be created rapidly by the populist leaders of the independence movement. At the same time they had to weld together a tremendous variety of indigenous cultures into a viable national entity. Dutch colonial rule had been based overwhelmingly on the populous central island of Java, and much of the remainder of the country had developed very unevenly under the exploitative tutelage of a centralized administration. From the strictly Moslem areas of North Sumatra to the tribes of Borneo and the Christian islands of the east, a variety of social and economic systems faced very different problems for their development. The catchphrase of the new regime, 'Unity in Diversity', expressed more of a hope than a reality.

Indeed, the first independence government after 1945, under the charismatic leadership of Sukarno, immediately faced a number of regional rebellions, from Islamic movements in Java and Sumatra, and from Christian groups in

the South Moluccas. Dealing with these, and attempting to build up a sense of national unity for political and economic reconstruction, consumed the energies of the groups of nationalist, communist and military politicians who held state power by the middle of the 1950s. They dealt superficially with the problems generated by regional inequality rather than focusing on the underlying structure of regionalism itself; and as inequalities worsened, politics at the centre became factionalized with élite politicians, and most notably the military, voicing regional demands as a means for outflanking their opposition within the élite. The ensuing atmosphere of ideological confrontation was heightened by Sukarno's use of anti-colonial rhetoric as a substitute for coherent economic or political planning. Stress was laid on the external enemy, be it the Dutch, the neo-colonial state of Malaysia or the machinations of American imperialism. Indeed, internal opposition came to be defined primarily in external terms. When in 1958, areas such as North Sulawesi and Central Sumatra rebelled against a central government which they saw as restricting their cultural, economic and political development, the suppression of their revolt was legitimized by its supposedly pro-imperialist stance. Similarly, the lack of any referendum offered to the people of West Irian (West New Guinea) in the discussions leading up to the UN-sponsored New York agreement of 1962 was justified by a simple emphasis on the need to wrest the territory from the colonial yoke and restore it to Indonesia. In the early 1960s, foreign policy was again dominated by a sloganized posturing which portrayed the formation of Malaysia (from the states of Sarawak, Sabah and Malaya) as a Western plot to destabilize Indonesia. As the economy declined from lack of serious national planning, and as factional divisions intensified in the Indonesian political élite, the emphasis was increasingly placed on externally induced threats and on which group could deal with them most effectively.

In this political climate, one might have assumed that East Timor would have been given some importance in foreign-policy calculations. After all, what could have been more suitable than a relic of colonialism, bordering Indonesian territory and controlled by a fascist government? According to most analysts, however, this was not the case.[12] East Timor was either ignored, or its status confirmed. As Foreign Minister Subandrio stated: 'We have no claims on Portuguese Timor, nor on North Borneo or any other territory outside of the former Dutch East Indies'.[13] In a similar vein, but more specifically, a UN document on East Timor, published in 1962, stated that: 'For its part the government of Indonesia has declared that it maintains friendly relations with Portugal and has no claim to Portuguese Timor, which has never been part of the Dutch East Indies and therefore is not of the same status as West Irian'.[14] Basing themselves upon such statements most commentators concluded that, although exceptional to the trends of the period, it appeared as if Indonesia had little interest in East Timor.

Yet, contrary statements are relatively easy to find, and a very different account can be presented, one which indicates a continuing interest in East Timor by sections of the Indonesian hierarchy throughout the period. As early as 1950, Mohammed Yamin, Minister of Justice and Education in the 1950s,

argued that Indonesia should incorporate the Dutch East Indies, North Borneo and the whole of Portuguese Timor.[15] At a later date, in 1961, Ruslan Abulgani, Vice-Chairman of Sukarno's Supreme Advisory Council, stated that Indonesia's 'eyes and heart are directed towards Portuguese Timor . . . fill your hearts with hatred not only for Portuguese colonialism, but for all colonialism still existing on Asian and African soil'.[16] In 1963 Mokoginta, a high-ranking general, was rather more specific: 'If the people of East Timor today or tomorrow started a revolution . . . we would support them . . . After independence, if they wanted to stay independent, fine — if they want to join Indonesia, we will talk it over'.[17]

Rebellion

Beyond such statements, there is also evidence of more supportive action. The 1962 UN report on East Timor cited the existence of a 'Bureau of Liberation of the Timor Republic', in Jakarta. In spring 1963, the Bureau claimed to have established a government, with twelve minsters in Batugade inside East Timor. It appealed for recognition from other governments. These events coincided with reports of a military build up in East Timor, with a thousand new troops reportedly being sent in by Portugal.

The emergence of this Indonesian-sponsored movement in the early 1960s seems to have been related to events a few years earlier in East Timor in 1959. In that year, fourteen Indonesian military officers landed on the East Timor coast, and requested political asylum; they were from southeast Sulawesi, and had been involved in a rebellion in 1958 against the government. The Portuguese allowed them to settle, ten in Bacau and four in the southern area of Viqueque. In these areas, and particularly in the regions of Uatolari and Uatocarabu near Viqueque, the Indonesians began to ally themselves with groups opposed to Portuguese rule, whose objective seems to have been unification of Indonesia with Portuguese Timor. As one of the group's leaders subsequently stated: 'We never regarded ourselves as part of Portugal. We are not interested in the government of Indonesia, but in the integration of East and West Timor. We have ancient links — we never had a border before Portugal colonized Timor'.[18] An uprising was launched on 7 June 1959, with attacks on Portuguese *postos* in Uatolari and Uatocarabu. In order to isolate these *postos* telephone links with Baucau were cut. A revolt was also planned in Dili, but details of it were leaked to the Portuguese administration by an informer; a truckload of arms was stopped by the Portuguese just prior to its arrival in Dili's central barracks. Fighting in the Viqueque area was intense; the Portuguese flew in a company of one hundred Goan troops from India to suppress the rebellion, which ended on 14 June. Estimates of deaths varied between 160 and 1000, but all reports agreed on the brutality with which the Portuguese put down the revolt — villages were burnt, families killed and most of the leadership were executed. Fifty-eight Timorese were exiled to Angola and Mozambique after having been told that they were being sent for trial in Lisbon.

Reports of the degree of Indonesian involvement in the rebellion varied considerably, some even arguing that the fourteen officers were direct agents of the Indonesian Government, sent to organize the overthrow of the colonial administration.[19] What seems most likely is that they were genuine dissident regional leaders who tried to mobilize local discontent as a means for rebuilding their base in East Timor. What is indisputable is that they were assisted both by the Indonesian consul in Dili and by supporters in Kupang in Indonesian Timor, who had agreed to supply arms. These facts indicate, at the very least, that there already existed an integrationist lobby which had the support at some level of the Indonesian Government. News of the ease with which fourteen soldiers could organize an internal rebellion in such a short period of time must have spurred on any members of the Indonesian political élite who hoped to extend national boundaries. Certainly, it would have encouraged them to support a 'liberation bureau' trying to set up an alternative Timorese government. Hence the prominence of the bureau in the early 1960s, and its proof of its success to its supporters with the formation of a 'government' inside East Timor in 1963.

Despite such successes this project seems to have suffered a temporary demise during the next few years, resurfacing in the late 1960s. This is obviously related to the tumultuous turn of events in Indonesia during the middle of that decade.

On 30 September 1965, a group of junior army officers launched a coup to pre-empt what they claimed was an impending takeover of the Sukarno Government by a pro-Western 'Council of Generals'. On the same day, the armed forces, under the leadership of a group of major generals, notably the commander of the army's Strategic Reserve (KOSTRAD), General Suharto, staged a counter-coup, quickly defeating the earlier attempt. Implicating prominent nationalist and communist politicians in this attempt, and fuelling the widespread resentment of the communist party amongst Indonesia's Islamic groups, the military gradually took over the government, completing this with the effective resignation of Sukarno on 11 March 1966. In this process, the military oversaw the creation of an authoritarian corporatist state, purging and then strictly controlling political parties and trade unions. In the months following the military takeover, at least 600,000 people were killed in sectarian violence. The formation of Indonesia's *Orde Baru* (New Order) state was characterized by an increasing militarization of all spheres of economic and social life, and by a highly centralized system of political rule based on a Javanese military élite. In the run-up to the coup, foreign-policy issues such as East Timor had disappeared from the political scene as the infighting between nationalist, communist, military and Islamic élites intensified. After the coup, the military's energies were totally consumed in political reconstruction and consolidation of state power. Foreign-policy issues were again effectively shelved until the end of the 1960s. Furthermore, the ideological affinities between the Caetano regime in Portugal and the Suharto Government were such that problems potentially bringing them into conflict, such as border clashes and smuggling between Indonesian and Portuguese Timor, were usually

resolved quite quickly.

However, within the military, and in its higher echelons, the 'problem' of Portuguese Timor soon resurfaced as an issue. The integrationist perspective gained influence. By late 1969, it had been taken up by BAKIN, the army's central co-ordinating intelligence agency and think tank and, more particularly, by OPSUS, Suharto's special operations unit headed by his closest political adviser, Brigadier General Murtopo. OPSUS studies concluded that since an independent Portuguese Timor could pose a security threat to eastern Indonesia, the military would prefer to incorporate the island into the republic if Portuguese rule became unstable or unviable.[20] As OPSUS saw it, the problem lay less with the decision to incorporate than with the decision on how incorporation could be achieved.

Despite such unofficial conclusions, however, the official position of the Indonesian Government remained as before. Even as late as April 1974, on the eve of the coup that was to overthrow the Caetano regime, Indonesian policy remained officially one of 'non-interference' in Portuguese Timor. Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, even went as far as to welcome the progressive character of the post-Caetano Government, since he claimed it had 'an intention to give independence'. The only hint of any dissent at official government level had come in April 1972, when the state-controlled press had carried reports of an insurrection in East Timor a few days before an official Indonesian delegation was to visit Dili to discuss the setting up of a border commission. Although the report was later denied, the objective was achieved, namely the blocking of a formal government contact which would directly recognize the border on the ground in Timor. It was a significant gesture, recognized by most senior members of the military as emanating from OPSUS.[21]

In a sense, this incident typified post-war policy towards Portuguese Timor. Behind the official statements of the recognition of Portugal's position, and of the acceptance of the right of non-interference, there was intermittent pressure for annexation. This had grown to significant proportions in the intelligence service by the early 1970s. Furthermore contrary to the opinions of many observers, it had also become a very determined lobby, as was shown by subsequent events.

Notes

1. This figure includes both Chinese and Mestico ('mixed blood' Chinese).
2. Most Chinese in East Timor are Hakka, originally from Fukien province. See Hill, 1978.
3. Ranck, 1977, pp. 17–29.
4. Ibid., p. 20.
5. Hill, 1978, pp. 44–5.
6. According to Dunn, the number of students in secondary schools by 1974 was still only 1200. See Dunn, 1983, p. 31.

7. For general data on the health situation in East Timor, see *The World Health Statistics Annual, 1973–6*, Vol. III, UN Publications, New York, 1976.

8. Nilsson, K., 'Sleepy Island Due to Wake Up', *Straits Times*, 19 June 1964.

9. Most notably in 1955, from which date Portugal was required to report regularly on the progress of its decolonization (it refused), in 1961 when Portugal was openly condemned for its colonial policies, and after 1963, when Portugal was expelled from all UN bodies.

10. In the late 1960s two companies were drilling offshore: Timor Oil and International Oil, both Australian based. They were joined by other American companies in the early 1970s.

11. See, for example, the early debates amongst members of these groups in journals such as *Seara*, a Catholic newspaper, *Voz de Timor*, mostly circulating in Dili.

12. Writing in 1966, a pro-Indonesian American academic stated: 'In conclusion, we can say that in a sense Portuguese Timor is a trust territory, the Portuguese holding it in trust for Indonesia'. Weatherbee, pp. 683–95.

13. See *Antara*, Indonesian Government news agency, 2 October 1962.

14. United Nations Document A/AC 108/L.13, 3 December 1962, paragraph 35.

15. *Antara*, Indonesian Government News Agency, 1 February 1950. Feith comments that Yamin's 'stature as a nationalist ideologue was second only to that of the President himself' (see Feith, 1962, p. 342).

16. Ruslan Abdulgani, speech to the Afro-Asian Solidarity meeting, Jakarta, 1961.

17. General Mokoginta, interviewed in the *Washington Post*, 10 May 1963.

18. José Manuel Duarte, a Timorese leader of the Viqueque uprising, interviewed in Lisbon, by Jill Jolliffe, 11 November 1978 (from a transcript in the author's possession).

19. José Martins, a leader of the pro-Indonesian KOTA party, argues that the 'refugees' were sponsored by the Indonesian Government, who, through the Indonesian Consul in Dili, won the support of Timorese through bribes. See Martins, J., Affidavit submitted to the UN Secretary-General, 23 March 1976.

20. See Dunn, 1983, p. 106.

21. For details of this event, see Reece, B. 'Portuguese Timor, 1974', in *Australia's Neighbours*, Canberra, April–June 1974.

3. Changing Strategies: The Emergence of Political Parties and the Indonesian Response

On 25 April 1974, the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (AFM) overthrew the Caetano regime. Weary of defending an archaic feudal power clinging to the last vestiges of its colonial empire, army officers replaced a fascist government with one committed to capitalist modernization and decolonization. Whilst the new head of the 'Junta of National Salvation', Antonio de Spinola, favoured progressive autonomy for the colonies within a Portuguese framework, most army officers, fresh from their experience of fighting Africa's liberation movements, preferred some form of independence.

News of the April coup filtered to East Timor through radio broadcasts and military messages, but no official pronouncement was forthcoming. The governor, understandably, was reluctant to make any statement. A strong supporter of the Caetano regime, he had publicly denounced the AFM two days before the coup. Portuguese radio promised the disbanding of the secret service, the reform of the administration, and the freedom to organize political parties. Governor Aldeia held firm, however, convinced that the coup was ephemeral. Soon he was forced to react. The Portuguese company, SAPT, had sacked some of its workers who were requesting an increase in their US$10 monthly salary. The company appealed to Aldeia, who would have reacted with the normal coercive Caetanoist policies had it not been for the arrival of two AFM delegates from Lisbon. The delegates assessed the case, awarded the workers a 100 per cent wage rise and rebuked the governor.[1] This event, symbolizing the momentous changes occurring in Lisbon, galvanized Timorese politics. Associations and groupings that had led a shadowy, partial existence amongst the indigenous members of the colonial élites rapidly emerged to put forward their ideas for independence and development. The coup had taken them by surprise, and the rather vague and general notions they had been discussing since the middle of the 1960s now had to be concretized in specific ideas for popular discussion.

The coup had also come as something of a surprise to other interested parties, all of whom were to play a crucial role in the events of the next two years: Indonesia, where the intelligence services were pressing the government to annex East Timor; neighbouring powers, such as Malaysia and Australia, staking out their place in the region's rapid development; and the industrialized nations of Western Europe, Japan and the United States, concerned about

strategic and economic interests in Southeast Asia.

All these actors, however distant, were to influence markedly East Timor's decolonization. The struggle for the emerging state's independence soon became a dynamic interplay of these powerful forces whose interests shaped, restrained and determined the outcome.

The most immediate issue for the East Timorese in the early dry season of 1974 was, however, independence — what it was and how it could be gained.

Party formation

Whilst the changes in Lisbon had little immediate impact on rural society with its well-tried means of protecting itself from colonial interference, they nevertheless had a profound impact on Timor's élites, and particularly on sections of the administrative élite centred on the towns, and notably in Dili. Opposition to aspects of Portuguese rule amongst the urban élite had centred largely on a small group of students and administrators meeting clandestinely in the capital.[2] The main outlets for their ideas had been Catholic newspapers with a tiny circulation, such as *A Provincia de Timor* and *Seara*. Their conclusions had been piecemeal, general and rather vague. Topics such as traditional marriages and the education system were discussed. There was little in the way of overall critique, and little offered as an alternative. Their political inexperience was perhaps best illustrated by their approaches made to the Indonesian Government in 1973 to assist in the struggle against colonialism. This student–administrator group together with more senior bureaucrats who had been incorporated into colonial politics by standing for the Legislative Assembly[3] in the 1960s, as well as leading Timorese landowners, formed the bases for the two main political parties organized in Dili after the April coup.

What was initially the most popular party titled itself the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT). Its programme called for democratization, income redistribution, human rights, but above all, for 'Self determination for the Timorese people oriented towards a federation with Portugal with an intermediate stage for the attainment of independence', and a 'Rejection of the integration of Timor into any potential foreign country'.[4] The union's organizing members illustrated its leadership. Its president, Mario Carrascalao, was a forestry engineer and coffee-plantation owner. Two other senior members, Lopez da Cruz and Domingos d'Oliveira were customs officials. Both da Cruz and Carrascalao were formerly representatives of the only political party allowed in East Timor, the Caetanoist *Accao National Popular*. UDT was the first party to be formed, on 11 May, and it soon became the most popular. Basing itself firmly on two groups — Dili's senior administrative élite and leading plantation owners — it also drew support from a range of *suco liurais*, most notably in the areas of Ermera, Maubara and Maubisse. Using their positions of power in the kinship system, these *liurais* built up support for the UDT in their areas. The Portuguese flag, revered as a sacred object (*lulik*), was used skilfully to attract members from the countryside. UDT thus welded

together traditional and administrative élite centres of power in a coalition which promised development within a familiar framework — 'Proceeding in the shadow of the Portuguese flag', as their programme put it.[5]

In the months that followed, UDT's leadership often appeared divided between those whose positions in the civil service led them to stress the benefits of a continuing Portuguese role and those who focused more on the need for independence, an idea born from their growing awareness of the benefits to their commercial concerns of economic diversification beyond the Portuguese orbit. In May, however, they presented a united, self-confident front.

Just as the UDT combined the interests of urbanized with rural-based élites, so too did a second party, the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT), but it did so in a rather different way. Comprised mostly of the newly recruited members of the urban élites, most of ASDT's founders lived in Dili, although they retained ties with their rural areas of origin, and several of them were from *liurai* families. The oldest member of ASDT's organizing committee was its 37 years old future president, Xavier do Amaral. The average age of the committee was twenty-seven. Most of its members were employed in the government service, as administrators or teachers. Many were Catholics trained in the Jesuit seminary of Dare, near Dili. The programme of the ASDT, published at its inception on 12 May, was 'based on the universal doctrines of socialism and democracy', and committed the party to 'the rejection of colonialism'. One of its founding members stated subsequently that the essence of the programme: 'called for gradual independence, preceded by administrative, economic, social and political reforms. A period of three to eight years was what was thought to be necessary in preparing the country for independence'.[6] In the words of another of its founding members: 'ASDT was social democratic, with the emphasis on democratic. It was formed to defend the idea of the right to independence'.[7]

Although ASDT's programme was rather general, its members agreed on a whole range of specific issues as attainable conditions assisting the achievement of independence: the need for literacy programmes, a priority for agricultural development, the fullest participation of Timorese in the political structure, the reassertion of Timorese culture and a widespread health programme. During the months that followed, ASDT members worked intensively, trying to see how these conditions could be developed. In this, they travelled outside the capital to provincial areas, where their ideas began to attract support. At the same time, in June and July, ASDT began to make tentative diplomatic contacts in the neighbouring countries of Indonesia and Australia. Its reception at ministerial level enhanced its status in East Timor as a more systematic alternative to UDT. It began to draw support from all levels of the rural social structure and, most importantly, from a number of prominent *liurai*.

Meanwhile, a third political party had been formed. Its title directly expressed its aims: 'the Association for the Integration of Timor into Indonesia'. For popular consumption, following its founding meeting on 25 May, it changed its name to the Timorese Popular Democratic Association, or

Apodeti. Its manifesto called for: 'An autonomous integration into the Republic of Indonesia in accordance with international law', and 'the teaching of the Indonesian language as a compulsory subject'. It promised human rights, freedom, a just income distribution, free education, free medical treatment and the right to strike.[8] Apodeti's most important leaders were Guilherme Gonçalves, a *liurai* from the border area, Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo, a southern-based cattle-rancher, and Osario Soares, a schoolteacher and administrative official. Support for Apodeti came mostly from Gonçalves' *sucos* but also from Dili's small Moslem community. The prominence of these particular individuals in Apodeti was of some significance. As noted earlier, the Indonesian intelligence service BAKIN, had been committed to the integration of East Timor for some time. During the 1960s it had built up an information network in East Timor, which worked through traders, customs officials and agents in Dili's Indonesian consulate. Gonçalves, Soares and, to a lesser extent, Araujo dealt with these agents in return for favours, sanctuary in the event of conflict and cash payments.[9] These three, together with a number of other pro-Indonesians, received financial support immediately after Apodeti was founded. Furthermore, before the Lisbon coup, BAKIN had already trained a number of pro-Apodeti East Timorese in radio broadcasting and interpreting. Apodeti was thus very much an Indonesian creation from its inception. It attracted minimal support. Whilst UDT and ASDT membership grew rapidly into the thousands, Apodeti never had more than 300 members throughout the whole of 1974.

Three further parties were created hurriedly, but they had little impact: 'the *Klibur Oan Timur Aswain* (KOTA) ('Sons of the Mountain Warriors') traced its roots to the Topasses, and wished to restore the position of *liurais* who could trace their ancestry to the Topasse period; the *Partido Trabalhista* (Labour Party), which like the KOTA party had no programme, had eight members, all of whom comprised one family; and the *Associacao Democratica Integracao Timor-Leste Australia* (ADLITA) collected money in return for promises of integration with Australia, but declined rapidly when the Australian Government rejected the idea at the end of 1974. None of these parties ever had more than a handful of members and played no part during decolonization.

Effectively there were two genuine political parties vying for popular support, and one created by Indonesia for its own purposes. Politics, which in Timorese society previously had meant representations to lineage elders and a complex set of discussions based on reciprocal obligations, now had a new referent — a choice between two general perspectives for the future, represented in conventional Western party forms. Initially, these different forms of politics existed in an uneasy truce, with those holding power in the indigenous sector being wary of the rather vague and general notions of the new parties, and those in the latter viewing rural politics as a tradition-bound system requiring modernization.

The perspectives of those in both systems soon began to change as external and internal events began to limit the scope of the possibilities envisaged by their leaders.

Diplomacy

On 12 June Deputy President of the Indonesian Parliament, John Naro, a member from Eastern Indonesia, argued in parliament that Indonesia should: 'Work out a special policy on Portuguese Timor so that finally that area will once again return to Indonesian control'.[10] Coming shortly after the formation of Apodeti, and with the growing awareness amongst Dili's élite of its ties with Indonesia, Naro's statement caused near panic. Most ASDT leaders still viewed Indonesia primarily in its role as founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and most of its members had been confident of a 'Bandung spirit' type support for independence from Portugal. Similarly, the UDT felt they had no reason to be concerned about their neighbour, many members hoped for trading and investment links with Indonesia.

In haste, a newly appointed diplomatic nominee from Fretilin's founding committee was sent by the ASDT to Jakarta to investigate. José Ramos-Horta was well received, or so it seemed. Naro appeared conciliatory, stressing his respect for the East Timorese people to choose their future. Foreign Minister Adam Malik was more direct and succinct. He recorded in writing three principles to which his government would adhere:

> That the independence of every country is the right of every nation, with no exception for the people in Timor; that the government had no intention of expanding or occupying other territories; that whoever governed in Timor after independence could be assured of Indonesian friendship and co-operation.[11]

Nothing could be clearer. Horta returned from Jakarta jubilant; armed with reassurances, he left for Australia.

As far as both ASDT and UDT were concerned, the situation in Australia seemed even more favourable. A party from Australia's Foreign Affairs Department had visited East Timor in June. One of its members, James Dunn, the Australian Consul to Dili from 1962–4, had reported back to Canberra that there was a strong case for independence. Indeed, it was 'inconceivable that the Timorese would freely choose any form of integration with Indonesia'.[12] It was thus a considerable surprise to him when Horta found himself snubbed by the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Throughout July, he was refused meetings with both the Minister and the head of the Southeast Asia Department. Despite many requests from parliamentarians, the church and academics, the government refused to make other than confused, disclaiming and disinterested statements; it had no knowledge of the situation, and it was beyond its concern. Horta was advised to focus on Indonesia and Portugal.

Meanwhile, Lisbon was showing little interest in this diplomatic manoeuvring. Alves Aldeia had been replaced by Nivio Herdade, a lieutenant-colonel who had implemented Spinola's ideas in Guinea-Bissau, but he was not given any brief for decolonization when he took up his post in July. Beset by the urgent and pressing problems of war and decolonization in its African colonies,

Portugal seemed to be drifting with the tide in its 'land of good coffee'.[13] Indeed, although the Portuguese Government in June had made public the idea that 'three choices' would soon be presented to the East Timorese, these were not forthcoming, and on 4 August 1974, in a joint communiqué with the UN on decolonization, it referred only to its African colonies.

Consequently, in Dili and the other centres of administrative and *liurai* power in the middle of the dry season, it was assumed that the Portuguese were committed but preoccupied, the Australians uninformed and unconcerned, and the Indonesians supportive and secure. Confident in the strength of their perspectives, the country's increasingly popular parties, ASDT and UDT, planned their campaigns for the coming months.

BAKIN and its allies

Berita Yudha is an Indonesian newspaper, reflecting the army's view of events. At the end of August, it analysed the situation in East Timor, concluding that the right to self-determination 'cannot be separated from general world strategies'. More specifically, it accused ASDT of 'seeking communist support'. Although *Berita*'s ideas were not taken up by any other newspaper, they were as significant as Naro's retracted parliamentary statement after the April coup. Both indicated that behind Indonesia's official pronouncements, a very different future was being mapped out for East Timor.

The driving force behind this was BAKIN. Since its commitment to integration in the 1960s, the Indonesian intelligence service had built up a widespread network of which the Apodeti leaders were a part. BAKIN represented the views of a highly influential grouping within the military, whose hallmarks were its concern for national security (and hence territorial expansion to ensure this security), a strong state and a corporate society. In the 1970s it spanned the major ministries and was the leading light in Suharto's inner cabinet. Its spokesmen were: Major-General Ali Murtopo, also head of OPSUS, the special operations unit which had masterminded Suharto's most successful operations (to overthrow former president Sukarno, to manipulate political parties and incorporate West Papua New Guinea in 1969); Lieutenant-General Yoga Sugama, close associate of Suharto and a leading figure in both OPSUS and KOPKAMTIB (the Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order, and the army's security command and interrogation unit); Admiral Sudomo, head of KOPKAMTIB; and, above all, Major-General Leonardus Benjamin Murdani, head of both military intelligence operations and KOPKAMTIB's special-tasks intelligence unit. He was the military man with the closest CIA contacts in Indonesia.[14]

In essence, these men and the network of military officials surrounding them were the godfathers of Indonesia's New Order regime. They had a tremendous influence in areas such as foreign affairs, diplomacy, defence and internal security. They were even able to set the terms of the country's academic debates through think tanks such as the Jakarta based Centre for Strategic and

International Studies (CSIS). They were intimately involved in the state's economic planning, and, like all military officers, had carved out niches in the extensive structure of economic pay-offs based on Indonesia's mineral wealth, oil deposits and investment potential. Not that they represented any particular sections of trade, agriculture or industry. In Indonesia the military itself constitutes the dominant fraction in each of these areas, to which other economic groups — financiers, indigenous entrepreneurs, landholders — are all subordinate.

Although in the late 1960s the views of the BAKIN group were not held by any other military groupings, with the exception of some members of the eastern Indonesian parliamentary lobby, such as Naro, they began to spread rapidly from the time of the April coup onwards. Events spurred this movement in 1974, events which themselves often owed much to the work of BAKIN and its operatives.

As early as the middle of 1974, BAKIN had finalized the general details of its plan to integrate East Timor. The scheme was entitled *Operasi Komodo* (Operation Giant Lizard), and, according to its founding documents, non-military means of annexation were preferred. *Komodo* employed several leading operatives, each with specific aims. Elias Tomodok was the Indonesian consul in Dili and part of the eastern Indonesian lobby. He came from the island of Roti, off the west coast of Indonesian Timor. Since 1968 he had transmitted diplomatic messages from Dili to Jakarta, exaggerating support for integration and emphasizing the worst aspects of Portuguese colonialism. Similarly, the governor of Indonesian Timor, El Tari, was an early 1970s recruit to BAKIN's plans. Together with a BAKIN agent from West Timor named Louis Taolin, he played a key role in early contacts with Apodeti members and East Timorese in the border areas. Outside Indonesia, the task of drumming up diplomatic support for integration in the United States and Western Europe was handed to a Sumatran, Liem Bian Kie (also known as Jusuf Wanandi). The director of CSIS, Harry Tjan Silalahi, took care of Australia and Portugal. A number of army officers was chosen specifically to organize a military campaign from the border if necessary. The most prominent of these were colonels Sugianto, Hernoto, Sinaga, Dading and Kasenda, assisted by a major named Andreas. Finally, an Indonesian Timorese, Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Dinuth, was dispatched to Kupang to take charge of propaganda directed to East Timor. The Indonesian news agency, *Antara*, was organized to disseminate propaganda on East Timor to an international audience.[15]

The *Berita* article and the Naro statement were the opening salvoes of the *integrasi* campaign. *Komodo* was initiated in late August, when its actors began to play out their roles in earnest. Early in September, El Tari invited the leaders of Apodeti to Kupang, after which he released a press statement stating that the provincial government intended 'to assist the struggle of Apodeti'.[16] In mid-September, one of Indonesia's leading generals, Amir Machmud, claimed that although Indonesia was not territorially ambitious, it had no objections to integration. Clearly, the BAKIN bandwagon had started to roll, and in the next few weeks more leading figures began to support integration. One of the most

surprising converts in this was none other than the Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, who three months earlier had supported independence and who had always been staunchly opposed to Murtopo's opportunistic manoeuvring. On 18 September, he publicly supported Apodeti. Why this sudden change? To explain this we have to turn to Timor's 'uninformed and unconcerned' neighbour Australia, fresh from its urging Ramos-Horta to 'look westward'.

To a *kabupaten* capital 60 km from the Indonesian city of Jogjakarta, in September, President Suharto travelled to develop his growing friendship with Australia's Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. Before arriving in Wonosobo, Whitlam had met with a coterie of generals, spending most of his time chatting to BAKIN officers, and notably Yoga Sugama. During their discussions in Wonosobo, Suharto tentatively raised the subject of East Timor and was staggered by Whitlam's resolute answer. The Australian prime minister was fully briefed, personally involved and disarmingly forthright: 'An independent East Timor would be an unviable state, and a potential threat to the area',[17] he said. He offered Australia's services in making a joint approach with Indonesia to Portugal, urging integration. At the end of the meeting, the Foreign Affairs Department published a briefing paper, which stated:

> Australia appreciates Indonesia's concern about the future of the territory and shares its belief that the voluntary union of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia, on the basis of an internationally acceptable act of self-determination, would seem to serve the objective of decolonization, and at the same time the interests of stability in the region.[18]

As one commentator noted: 'Mr. Whitlam went much further, one suspects, than his Indonesian hosts required'.[19] Murtopo and his coterie must have been overjoyed, as Suharto returned to Jakarta mulling over BAKIN's advice that Indonesia would not necessarily be isolated internationally if it was to integrate East Timor. Clearly, the Australian Government was neither 'uninformed' nor 'unconcerned'. Adam Malik drew his own conclusions, and drifted tactically in the appropriate direction by supporting Apodeti. Some two months later in Jakarta's Foreign Press Club, he was to argue that integration was the only serious option for East Timor.[20]

Fretilin's programmes

The significance of increased Indonesian diplomatic activity and of the Wonosobo meeting had little immediate impact on Dili's political activity. After the diplomatic successes of June and August, the parties had turned inwards, consolidating their programmes and strengthening their support. The most fundamental changes were taking place in ASDT.

During July and August, ASDT had done well in most areas of East Timor. Although still not the largest party, it had increased its support among some of the more strategically placed *liurai*. This was symbolized in its leaders' meeting

with the widow of Dom Boaventura, the *liurai* who had led the 1912 rebellion. In its campaigning, ASDT repeatedly encountered the demand for a more immediate transition to independence than suggested in its programme. This, together with a changed atmosphere in Lisbon, where Spinola seemed to be being outflanked by more radical army officers such as Otelo and Gonçalves, and an increasing knowledge of the successful models of independence movements in Angola and Mozambique, led ASDT members to change their organization's structure and objectives at a conference held in Dili on 12 September 1974.

The nature of the change from ASDT to a new political organization named Fretilin (Frente Revolucionara do Timor Leste Independente) is most aptly described by one of its founding members: 'ASDT was formed to defend the idea of the right to independence; Fretilin was formed to fight for independence'. This formation required a very different type of politics, one based on mobilizing mass support for independence. Fretilin's structure and programme were directed primarily to this end. The programme called for ultimate *de jure* independence from Portugal, with *de facto* independence being sought for first, through a rapid process of decolonization. It pinpointed the main areas for decolonization: the administration and control of the state, institutional racism, cultural transformation, education and economic organization. Fretilin's structure, although still centred on the Dili political élite, had now devolved a certain amount of decision-making to regional sub-committees responsible to a central committee in the capital. There regional sub-committees dealt with particular areas such as education, health and economic development, and were also seen as springboards for the mobilization of support in the rural areas.

With this programme finalized, Fretilin leaders began to develop their ideas on the means for decolonization, by working with their supporters through the avenues provided by regional sub-committees. During these months, Fretilin's popularity increased rapidly. By the end of the year, it was undoubtedly the largest party, easily surpassing the more conservative UDT. Its success lay in its commitment to independence, its presentation of concrete policies for change and the implementation of these policies and their operation in the countryside. Looking at some of these policies in the rural areas gives us some insight into why Fretilin increased its popularity in such a short space of time.

Whilst Fretilin leaders recognized that the development of East Timor's economy depended on building up a solid agricultural base, the September programme had made little reference to the role of agriculture in economic development. In later revisions of the programme, however, systematic policies were offered for the transformation of the agricultural sector, concentrating on land reform, technology, mechanization, agricultural co-operatives and trade. These were largely the result of the accumulated experiences of Fretilin members, who had given up their jobs in Dili in September and moved to the rural areas to work with regional sub-committees, assessing the possibilities of different strategies for agricultural development. One such individual was a founding member of ASDT, Nicolau Lobato, who left his post in the Finance

Department and moved to his home region of Bazar-tete, some 30kms outside Dili, to try and set up an agricultural co-operative. In October, an Australian journalist visited Bazar-tete and described Lobato's work:

> The co-operative is small, comprising about fifty people who share instruments and collectively work their private plots. 'The people are still suspicious of the idea', says Lobato. 'They have been drawn into similar collective projects before by either the Portuguese or the Japanese only to find themselves dispossessed. We have started off with a small number so that we can work out the problems that arise easily, and when it has shown itself to be successful then others will follow quickly. It demands a great deal of trust amongst the members that all decisions taken by the co-operative be taken democratically'. He was involved in what they call a 'production co-operative', and when things get off the ground they hope also to create 'consumer co-operatives' to market their goods and to break the present commercial stranglehold of the Chinese.[21]

Similar methods could be seen working in other co-operatives, in Bucoli, west of Baucau, and in Aileu. In the former, Vincente S'ahe, a Fretilin member and former engineering student in Lisbon, returned to the region where his father was the local *liurai*, and began to set up a distribution co-operative. A journalist visiting Bucoli in October reported:

> Bucoli people were planning a co-operative for next year's harvest. Villagers will pool their surplus crops (after deducting family needs) for sale in Dili for higher prices than they would get through Chinese middlemen. The receipts will be used as the villagers decide, to buy a truck perhaps, or build a co-operative store, to buy wholesale basic necessities or to buy a small tractor.[22]

These accounts illustrate the Fretilin approach. Beginning with rather vague and general notions, ideas for future development were concretized through the accumulated experience of their members. The results were proposals that were directly relevant, realizable and popular, emerging from specific forms of co-operation with the rural population. Consequently, in Fretilin's subsequent agricultural policies, areas were targeted to be worked co-operatively at the *suco* level, using shared implements. Half the crop was to be delivered to the consumer co-operative and half to the families involved in production. The consumer co-operative would then purchase what was agreed on by the producers themselves from other co-operatives via the Dili administration. The main areas for co-operation would be fertile lowland areas (such as Maliana in the west) and, as production increased, poorer subsistence areas could be brought into the system.

A similar process was at work in the educational system. At the time of the April coup, the illiteracy rate in East Timor was about 93 per cent.[23] Fretilin's commitment to the attainment of literacy in the process of decolonization was

embodied in both ASDT and Fretilin programmes, but it was not until mid-1974 that they began to prepare the ground for this, by collecting material for a literacy handbook in Tetum, the most well-known of Timor's many languages, which served as its *lingua franca*. Organized by one of Fretilin's most intelligent and articulate members, the former Lisbon student, Antonio Cavarinho (who subsequently adopted the name Mau Lear), areas were selected from which teachers could be recruited to train in Paulo Freire's well-known techniques for language acquisition. A handbook entitled *Rai Timur Rai Ita Niang* (Timor is our country) was eventually produced for use by such teachers. It contained 50 words in common use, which were illustrated, written in Tetum, broken into syllables and then placed in context with associated words. An exponent of Freire's ideas who observed the literacy handbook in use, concluded that although the use of Freire's method was somewhat propagandist: 'Nevertheless there were some fairly dramatic successes not only with people learning to read in three months, but also in encouraging people to write short stories, and generally write of their experiences'.[24]

The way in which this literacy campaign was built up similarly characterizes Fretilin's approach in the post-September months — general themes were enshrined into popular policies through continuous work in the countryside. By such means Fretilin was able to formulate a systematic programme for East Timor's decolonization and post-independence development. As distinct from the rather general notions of the earlier ASDT policies, a programme published by Fretilin at the end of November 1974 was detailed and comprehensive, with concise proposals for areas such as health, education, justice and economic reconstruction.[25]

The growing awareness in Timor's regions that such policies could be achieved, produced a substantial swing to Fretilin in the later months of the year. Whilst the UDT retained its generalized programme and confined its campaigning to Dili and the *liurai* of areas such as Ermera, Maliana and Maubara, Fretilin expanded into new regions, drawing on all sections of the rural population. By the end of the year, Fretilin's claim that it was based on 'the support of all Timorese patriots'[26] across the social and regional spectrum seemed a reasonable description of what was rapidly becoming a truly nationalist party.

Paradoxically, appearances tended at times to conceal this trend. For example, when Almeida Santos, Minister for Interterritorial Co-ordination, made the first serious visit by the Lisbon Government to Timor in the middle of October, he noted a strong support for UDT in the colony, and what he called 'the deep love the Timorese have for Portugal'.[27] Santos based this conclusion on the constant waving and presentation of Portuguese flags to him during his visit. He saw it as a sign of support for a federation with Portugal, which was also the main item of UDT's programme at this stage. What he had encountered, of course, was the traditional presentation of *lulik* objects to a foreign visitor, of which ancient Portuguese flags and bibles were often the most important; but this didn't lessen Santos' apparent conviction, nor UDT's enthusiasm for it.

Realism — Portuguese style

On his journey back to Portugal, Almeida Santos made two stops, in Jakarta and then in Canberra. There he met the relevant officials and presented a rather different face to the one he had shown in East Timor. Indeed, in Canberra he stated explicitly that whatever happened in East Timor had to be acceptable to the Indonesian Government. He was to say much the same when he reiterated Portugal's 'three choices' policy before the UN General Assembly in early December. Yet the same minister could still state in March that Indonesia had no territorial ambitions on Portuguese Timor.[28] Thus, on the one hand, for Timorese consumption, Lisbon's representative condoned a federal solution entailing eventual independence, and on the other he insisted to his government's allies that this solution must be acceptable to a state which had already made clear in several arenas its hostility to independence and its desire for integration. Clearly, there was something more to Santos' expressions of affection than was immediately apparent.

Earlier, on 5 October, the *Komodo* group had scored a major victory. Suharto had authorized Murtopo to handle all negotiations with Lisbon on East Timor. Within a few days, a meeting had been arranged with Portuguese leaders and Murtopo arrived in Lisbon on 14 October. He and his entourage booked into the Lisbon Sheraton Hotel, where they were welcomed by the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Dr Jorge Campignos, an old university friend of the Indonesian ambassador to Brussels, himself a friend of Murtopo. Murtopo was worried that the resignation of Spinola and his replacement by more radical officers might make the Portuguese Government less sympathetic to the Indonesian position. He need have had no cause for concern. The new president, Costa Gomez, described independence for East Timor as 'unrealistic' and Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves reportedly exclaimed that the independence notion was 'nonsense'. Gomez concluded that there were only two options for East Timor: integration with Indonesia or self-government under the aegis of Portugal, whilst Gonçalves simply seemed to prefer integration.

By the end of Murtopo's trip to Lisbon, Almeida Santos had already left for East Timor. In fact he may well have been about to make his 'affection' speech when he received the following telegram from the prime minister:

> In contact with the President and the Prime Minister, the Indonesian delegation led by General Murtopo stated its conviction that the only formulae acceptable for Timor's future will be links with Portugal or Indonesia, which prejudice the independence option. In keeping with this, the Prime Minister considers it convenient for you to abstain in public from declarations giving emphasis to or even referring to the independence solution on a plane with other solutions.[29]

Santos' support for the UDT, with its ideas of continuing co-operation in a federated system, and his constant reference to the traditional links with

Portugal, are thus perhaps explained more adequately by the aims of his mission than by any 'affection' for the Timorese. His trips to Jakarta and Indonesia were similarly an integral part of this mission. Independence was rejected from his very first contact with the Indonesians. Indeed, Santos too probably thought it was 'nonsense'.

Delighted by the outcome of the Lisbon meeting, Murtopo returned to Jakarta. As ministers such as Malik fell into line with his integration proposals, Murtopo began the first serious stage of the *Komodo* campaign. The objectives were clear:

- to build up support for Apodeti and to discredit the other parties in preparation for either a potential Portuguese referendum or a transitional administration involving the three main parties; and
- to prepare the ground for military intervention across the border from Indonesian Timor in the event of Apodeti proving unpopular and parties unfavourable to integration coming to power in East Timor.

The propaganda barrage now began in earnest. In November, *Berita Yudha* exposed supposed 'Chinese involvement' in East Timor, notably in Fretilin. Radio broadcasts from Jakarta and Kupang announced that Apodeti favoured integration, had the support of 70 per cent of the population, and was supported by Indonesia. UDT was described as 'neo-fascist', and it was reported that 'violence' was spreading through the territory.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese Government again presented its public face: 'Let Timor choose', said Costa Gomez in an interview with the Romanian press on 12 December.[29] In keeping with its public persona, the government appointed a new governor of East Timor, Colonel Lemos Pires, to oversee a process of decolonization. Significantly, he was given no systematic brief by the president, who nevertheless insisted to him that no compromise had been made with the Indonesian Government.[30] On his arrival at the end of November, Lemos Pires had with him a team of officers, some of whom were to play crucial roles over the coming months, most notably two younger officers who had previously served in Timor, majors Jonatas and Mota. One of Lemos Pires' first tasks was a letter of introduction to the governor of East Timor. Thanking him, El Tari replied: 'Together we can build the integration of East Timor with Indonesia'.[31] Clearly El Tari must have thought that Costa Gomez had conveyed the 'unofficial' view to Lemos Pires.

Along with El Tari, others were also trying to build alliances. In December, a party of American officials travelled to Lisbon on behalf of the Oceanic Company of Denver, Colorado, to sign an agreement with the Portuguese Government. An earlier agreement had been signed with another American company, Adobe Oil and Gas. Both agreements were for off-shore oil concessions south of East Timor, in the Timor Sea. Neither concession seemed large, nor immediately profitable. They attracted little attention, except amongst Australian oil interests and their political lobbyists, who subsequently devoted considerable resources to reversing these agreements.[32] Some twelve

months earlier. Indonesia and Australia had tentatively agreed a maritime boundary, following the Timor Trough, a sea-bed boundary some 40 miles off Timor's south coast, which marks the end of Australia's continental shelf. The boundary could not be finalized, however, because part of it came under East Timor's jurisdiction. Since drillings had begun to indicate that the sea-bed between Timor and Australia could contain substantial oil and gas deposits,[33] the Australian companies were anxious to finalize the boundary. Hence their dismay at Portugal granting concessions to American companies. Their vested interests strongly favoured Indonesian annexation, to keep the American companies out. They thus began an intense campaign of backroom lobbying for integration, powerfully orchestrated in Canberra throughout the coming year. Little of this was known at the time, but it began to exercise an increasingly important influence on the Australian Government's support for Indonesia's position.

Coalition

Whilst the new leaders of the AFM seemed prepared to acquiesce in the integration of East Timor into the Indonesian Republic, the team sent to oversee the process of decolonization seemed to have rather different views. As a supporter of Spinola's ideas, Lemos Pires was committed to the achievement of East Timorese independence, but within a Portuguese cultural (or Lusitanian) federation. Despite the absence of a brief for his governorship, Pires thus aimed to maintain peace, create the conditions for democratization and organize an act of self-determination within this framework. His main political advisors, Mota and Jonatas, had served in East Timor.[34] Both were committed to self-determination and independence in a fuller sense than Pires. Their problem was to transform this general commitment into strategies which could create the conditions in which the Timorese population could realistically participate in a process of self-determination, and to do this against their minister's preference for integration.

After a brief assessment, the AFM team formulated a general strategy by the beginning of 1975. Summarized, it was as follows: to create the conditions for a successful transition to independence over a period of years by promoting literacy, democratic processes, nationalist values and a basic development of the economic infrastructure.

Pires placed great stress on the training of a political–administrative élite to oversee the long-term creation of a new state. Both he and Jonatas were particularly concerned at conflicts between political parties restricting the emergence of such an élite. Although they soon came to regard Apodeti as a lost cause, they were particularly worried about potential conflicts between UDT and Fretilin. Pires concluded that a coalition between them would be 'the best buffer to Indonesia'.[35] Similarly, Jonatas felt that 'the coalition was the best way to proceed'.[36] Consequently, one of the first actions of the governor was to set up a Decolonization Committee on which the three main political

parties were invited to sit.[37] After Apodeti's immediate refusal, UDT and Fretilin began discussing Portuguese proposals for a coalition. Not that this was a new step, of course. Fretilin had suggested such a move previously, but it had been rejected by the UDT leadership. This time the situation was rather different. The colonial administration was pressing for an agreement, Indonesian attacks on both parties had intensified and, above all, Fretilin was in a much stronger position. Indeed, a little later, in February, an observer noted: '(UDT) is thought to have about 10 per cent of the people . . . Apodeti supporters are said to be few, perhaps only 5 per cent . . . Fretilin could possibly command about 60 per cent of the vote'.[38]

Whilst this probably exaggerated Fretilin's strength, it had undoubtedly become the leading party by the beginning of 1975. Its work in the countryside and the appeal of its programme had led to a very rapid increase in its popularity.

Consequently, the coalition was agreed in mid-January, and by mid-March had published proposals for a transitional government. The coalition partners agreed on 'total independence, rejection of integration, repudiation of colonialism, and recognition of decolonization'.[39] Fretilin rescinded its claim to be the 'sole legitimate representative' of East Timor but, as can be seen from the programme's points, the UDT moved to Fretilin's policies in most areas. Indeed Jonatas, who supervised the coalition negotiations, later went so far as to claim that the transitional government proposals were written by Fretilin members.[40] When published, these proposals called for a government with equal representation from UDT, Fretilin and the Portuguese Government, to be transitional for three years after which general elections would be held for Constitutional Assembly.

The coalition was established at some internal cost to both parties. Both the left of Fretilin and the right of UDT were initially highly suspicious. The former argued that it was detrimental for Fretilin's development to ally with a declining party which had never firmly supported genuine independence, and the latter feared that UDT would gradually drift leftwards.[41] The opposition of these two factions was to have a critical influence on developments over the next few months. In the short-term however, the overwhelming majority of the two parties' supporters seemed delighted with the coalition.[42]

Soon after its formation, the coalition sent a message to the Indonesian Government, requesting an improved basis for relations. It stated:

> The major political forces in Timor have formed a coalition for national independence. Being a country of Southeast Asia and a close neighbour of Indonesia, we are aware of our great responsibility for the maintenance of peace and political stability in this area. Thus we are anxious to establish a basis for mutual understanding of our common problems. We can assure you that now and in the future, after independence, we shall endeavour to promote friendship, good neighbourhood [sic] and co-operation for the progress of the people of Indonesia and of East Timor for world peace.[43]

A reply was soon forthcoming. Shortly after the message was sent, two Australian daily papers, the Melbourne *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, reported that Indonesia was planning a takeover of East Timor, with amphibious landings in Dili harbour, and an aerial assault on Baucau.[44] The origin of these reports seems to have been a military exercise held in South Lampung, Sumatra, where a simulation of an air- and sea-landing on East Timor was enacted on 18 February 1975. The Australian Defence Department reported this as an immediate precursor to an invasion, and journalists covered it as such. In actual fact, it was part of an escalation of *Operasi Komodo*, designed to convince the Portuguese and Timorese of the seriousness of the invasion option if political events were not to the Indonesian military's liking. It was yet another example of *Komodo* intensifying its operations on all fronts. Shortly after the Lampung simulation, *Antara* reporters had cabled news from East Timor of the 'persecution' of Apodeti members. These reports, filed by Taolin and Dinuth in Kupang, were increasingly picked up by the foreign press, notably a report in late February of a planned *coup d'état* by the AFM and Fretilin, with arms provided by the governor.[45] At about the same time that Adam Malik made a speech, on 25 February, stating that Indonesia was finding it difficult to tolerate the situation in East Timor, *Komodo* operatives organized a repairing of 100km of road along the border, and initiated a military training programme in West Timor for young men from Apodeti leader Guilherme Gonçalves' region of Atsabe. One of Gonçalves' supporters was arrested by Portuguese soldiers on suspicion of being a recruiting agent for the Indonesians. Interviewed by an Australian reporter, he related how he had been told by Gonçalves in a 1 November meeting which was also attended by four Indonesians in civilian clothing that he must 'urge strong people from his tribe to go to Indonesia for training. They would then come back to Portuguese Timor to fight against parties opposing merger with Indonesia'.[46]

These events were the result of *Operasi Komodo* moving into a higher phase. Realizing the minimal support both for Apodeti and its integration option, Murtopo and his coterie appeared to have decided to build up an area of specific regional support for Apodeti near the border with Indonesian Timor, using military means if necessary. Such support would make Apodeti a stronger regional party, whose 'persecution' by or 'conflict' with other parties in East Timor could provide a justification for military incursions or annexation.

Meanwhile, Murtopo travelled to London to renew his contacts with the Portuguese. In a detached house in the north of the city, and with the necessary assistance provided by the British Foreign Office, he confidently expected further guarantees from the Portuguese delegation, such as Indonesian participation in the decolonization process, the withdrawal of radical army officers from East Timor and the creation of a joint Portuguese–Indonesian consultative body in Dili. These seemed reasonable demands after Costa Gomes' comments to him during their October meeting. To Murtopo's surprise, the Portuguese delegates were rather less flexible than expected, rejecting all three proposals and complaining of Tomodok's activities and the

Kupang broadcasts. Further, they urged the Indonesians to integrate through the power of persuasion of the Timorese, and threatened to internationalize the issue. All this was a far cry from the earlier 'nonsense' proclamations of Gonçalves and Costa Gomes, and it clearly reflected the influence of the Dili AFM administration, which was well represented at the meeting. It seemed that it would no longer be quite so easy for the Portuguese leadership to acquiesce in an Indonesian takeover. The secret talks ended with the usual complimentary written exchanges, but Murtopo returned to Jakarta feeling somewhat aggrieved. His frustrations were increased when, in mid-April, three *Komodo* operatives, under the guise of commercial travellers, returned from a visit to Dili and its governor with the news that Apodeti was a lost cause. With the UDT–Fretilin coalition successfully preparing itself for transitional power, and with Portugal unwilling to seriously back the integration option, *Komodo* was clearly in need of new political directions.

The right to independence

Sections of the leadership of the Timorese Democratic Union were similarly embarking on a re-think. UDT had started out as the most popular party, with support in most levels of Timorese society, but now it was declining, and for some of its leaders it was becoming indistinguishable from its Fretilin opposition. Whilst leaders such as Domingos d'Oliviera and Mario Carrascalao had been very active in supporting the coalition, others had been decidedly lukewarm and wary. Most notable amongst these was Lopez da Cruz, President of UDT, who had helped found the party. During a visit to Dili, *Komodo* operatives (and most notably Sugianto) struck a responsive chord with da Cruz, and his fellow leader Augusto Mousinho, by stressing the leftward trend of coalition politics and the international isolation that would be experienced by a radical independent state in the region.

When Sugianto reported to Murtopo, the deputy head of BAKIN seized the chance to switch strategy; UDT could be won over, the coalition could be split and Indonesia would have the support of two of the three parties in any transitional government. Consequently, the visits of UDT leaders to Jakarta became more frequent,[47] and by the end of April Sugianto was able to report that da Cruz had succumbed to the arguments for integration, and that Mousinho would follow him.

Thus, whilst for public consumption Suharto was claiming that 'Indonesia has no plans to take over East Timor',[48] *Komodo*-sponsored disillusionment with the coalition was gaining ground amongst other UDT leaders, as Fretilin strengthened its position.

Once again, the reasons for Fretilin's success lay in its rural-based programme. Throughout the coalition period, the literacy campaign had been introduced into an increasing number of regions. In addition, Fretilin members spent much of their time travelling to *sucos*, presenting their programme for independence. UDT also did this, but to a lesser extent, and, more importantly,